



## **Georgia General Assembly**

### **House Budget and Research Office**

*This report is submitted pursuant the following resolution,*

**HR 57**

*which created the House Study Committee on Elementary and Secondary School Nutrition Programs to which members were appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Amy Carter", is written over a horizontal line.

Representative Amy Carter, Chairman



**THE FINAL REPORT OF THE  
GEORGIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STUDY COMMITTEE ON  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Honorable Amy Carter, Chair  
Representative, District 175**

**Honorable Robert Dickey  
Representative, District 140**

**Mr. Brad Gregory  
Colquitt County School System**

**Honorable Pam Dickerson  
Representative, District 113**

**Ms. Bridgette Matthews  
Elbert County School System**

**Ms. Falita Flowers  
Department of Early Care and Learning**

**Ms. Donna Carver  
Floyd County School System**

**Ms. Misty Friedman  
Department of Agriculture**

**Dr. Linette Dodson  
Carrollton City Schools**

**Ms. Nancy Rice  
Department of Education**

**Ms. Katie Whitehurst  
Royal Food Service**

**Dr. Emily Anne Vall  
Department of Public Health**

**Mr. Jon Samples,  
Samples Foods**

**Mr. Ken Overman  
Lowndes County School System**

**Stephanie Hollifield  
Parent**

## **INTRODUCTION**

House Resolution 57 (2017 Session) created the House Study Committee on Elementary and Secondary School Nutrition Programs. The committee was formed to study the overall condition of school nutrition programs in Georgia and to discuss opportunities for improvements to the state administration of these programs.

The resolution called for the following committee composition: three members of the House of Representatives: Representative Amy Carter (175th) as chair, Representative Robert Dickey (140th), and Representative Pam Dickerson (113rd); the state school superintendent or his or her designee: Ms. Nancy Rice; the commissioner of the Department of Public Health or his or her designee: Dr. Emily Anne Vall; the commissioner of the Department of Agriculture or his or her designee: Ms. Misty Friedman; the commissioner of the Department of Early Care and Learning or his or her designee: Ms. Falita Flowers; two members who are school nutrition directors and employed by a school system in the state: Ms. Donna Carver from Floyd County Schools and Ms. Bridgette Matthews from Elbert County Schools; two members who are finance directors for a local board of education: Mr. Ken Overman from Lowndes County Schools and Mr. Brad Gregory from Colquitt County Schools; two members who are producers or distributors of agricultural products: Ms. Katie Whitehurst of Royal Food Service and Mr. Jon Samples of Samples Foods; one member who is a parent of a child attending an elementary or secondary school in the state: Ms. Stephanie Hollifield; and a registered dietician: Ms. Linette Dodson from Carrollton City Schools. The House Budget and Research Office staff member assigned to facilitate the meetings was Ms. Sara Arroyo. The Legislative Counsel staff member assigned to the committee was Mr. Jeremy Arey.

The committee held five public meetings across Georgia: Elbert County on October 9, 2017; Brooks County on October 23, 2017; Treutlen County on November 6, 2017; Atlanta on November 16, 2017; and Floyd County on November 30, 2017. The study committee heard from the Department of Education, the Department of Early Care and Learning, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Agriculture, as well as school nutrition directors, agriculture producers, and food distributors.

## **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The Department of Education's School Nutrition Program administers eight national programs, including the school lunch program, the school breakfast program, the after school snack program, and the fresh fruit and vegetable program. The department is charged with:

- Enforcing federal and state rules and regulations for these programs. In FY 2018, the department reviewed 38 systems with 68 schools. If violations are found, corrective action is required by the local school system.
- Providing regulatory training and workshops to school systems; including the School Nutrition Directors Conference, USDA food ordering workshops, bookkeeper and procurement training workshops, and the Managers' Conference.
- Contracting storage of USDA foods in warehouses on behalf of local school systems. School systems pay a per box storage fee to the warehouse.
- Collaborating with allied agencies including GA Nutrition Council, Farm to School Alliance, and Georgia Organics to promote fresh food in schools.

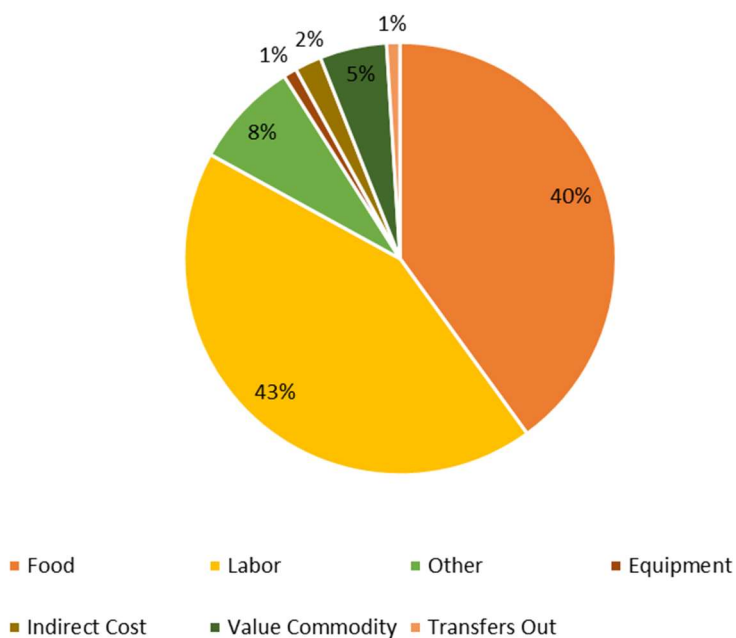
Below is Georgia school nutrition by the numbers as reported in the Georgia Department of Education School Nutrition Program Facts and Figures, 2015 to 2016 (the most recent data available):

### Georgia School Nutrition by the Numbers

Average number of lunches served daily	1,119,719
Participation rate	68.2%
Lunches served	202,412,348
Percentage of free eligibles eating	80.7%
Percentage of reduced eligibles eating	71.0%
Percentage of paying students eating	40.1%
Average number of breakfast served daily	589,581
Participation rate	37.0%
Breakfasts served	105,841,983
Percentage of free eligibles eating	48.2%
Percentage of reduced eligibles eating	34.3%
Percentage of paying students eating	12.5%

Georgia school systems operate their nutrition programs as businesses. School nutrition programs receive funds from the federal government, the state of Georgia, and their local school system. Programs are tasked with the purchase and preparation of nutritious meals within that revenue. For FY 2016, the largest expenditure for school nutrition programs is labor and food, making up 83% of school nutrition expenditures.

**Georgia School Nutrition Program Expenditures<sup>1</sup>**  
**FY 2016**



Meals must also meet certain USDA composition guidelines. For example, a smart snack must be a grain product that contains 50 percent or more whole grains by weight, have the first ingredient as fruit, vegetable, dairy, or protein, be a combination of at least ¼ cup fruit or

<sup>1</sup> Georgia Department of Education School Nutrition Program Facts and Figures 2015-2016

vegetable, and must meet nutrient standards.<sup>2</sup> At Floyd County Schools, committee members were served coffee from a student run enterprise called Caps and Grounds. The coffee bar serves products that meet smart snack guidelines.

For FY 2018, the state budget includes \$854,370,145 for school nutrition under the Department of Education. This includes \$24,073,489 in state funds and the recognition of \$830,187,832 in federal funds.<sup>3</sup> State funds provide a \$400 supplement for nutrition managers and funds for two sick days for school lunch room workers (rate of \$58/day for managers and \$37/day for non-managers). Federal funds provide reimbursement to school systems for meals/snacks provided.<sup>4</sup> For FY 2018, the maximum rate for reimbursement for a school lunch is \$3.25 for free, \$2.85 for reduced, and \$0.33 for paid.<sup>5</sup>

The committee heard from several local school systems regarding innovations in school nutrition. To reduce waste and increase the consumption of healthy foods Elbert County Schools implemented an offer versus serve approach, where students are given options for different fruits, vegetables, and entrees. Any remaining waste is composted and used in their vegetable garden. Treutlen County Schools gave the committee a tour of its greenhouse and vegetable gardens, which promotes student nutrition and agriculture education in their system. Carrollton City Schools discussed embedding nutrition education (including taste tests) into classroom curriculum. For example, students learned how to multiply fractions by doubling a recipe, the students then made the recipe, taste tested the recipe, and voted on the recipe; the students then developed bar graphs on the results.

## **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

### *Georgia Grown*

Georgia Grown is a marketing initiative of the Georgia Department of Agriculture to label products grown and produced in Georgia. The purpose of this initiative is to support the agriculture economy of the state by helping grow agribusinesses. Georgia grown has two cafeteria initiatives, Feed My School and Georgia Test Kitchen. These farm to cafeteria initiatives impact 42 percent of Georgia's student population (809,562 students across the state).<sup>6</sup> Food distributors will identify a product is Georgia grown on their ordering website. School cafeteria's participating in Georgia grown can then use this logo to identify products produced in Georgia:



### *2020 Vision for School Nutrition*

Launched in 2015 the 2020 Vision for School Nutrition seeks to ensure that 20 percent of every meal in every public school in Georgia will be comprised of Georgia products by the start of the 2020 school year. The second tier of this goal is that 20 percent of schools in Georgia will have

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<sup>2</sup> Information on breakfast and lunch standards can be found at [www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/meal-patterns](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/meal-patterns)

<sup>3</sup> HB 44 (2017 Session); the School Nutrition Program's budget also includes \$108,824 in agency funds

<sup>4</sup> Presentation by Department of Education: Georgia School Nutrition Program, Facts and Figures

<sup>5</sup> Federal Register/Vol. 82, No. 144/Friday, July 28, 2017/Notices

<sup>6</sup> Georgia Grown 2016 Annual Report

at least 50 percent of the required menu components comprised of Georgia grown products. Currently, the Georgia Department of Education sends school systems a questionnaire on the amount of products they serve that are produced in Georgia. The information is self-reported back to the Department of Education.

During the study committee, school systems indicated that it may be difficult to determine how much of a product is grown in Georgia. For example, if a large school system orders apples through a food distributor, part of the order may include Georgia apples and Washington apples. The Department of Agriculture is working with food distributors to identify and label products as Georgia grown.

### *Feed My School*

The Feed My School Program was launched in 2012 and links local food producers with local school systems. School nutrition directors apply for their system to become part of this three year program. The program is designed to help build a system's farm to school program and set the groundwork for sustainability. The Feed My School Program served 37,600 meals in 2016 that were 80 to 100 percent sourced from Georgia.<sup>7</sup> During its visit to Fowlers' Grapes the committee learned that the Department of Agriculture linked the farm with Treutlen County Schools to provide muscadine grapes during the season. The grower was happy to have a guaranteed buyer every season and the school was pleased to serve a locally grown product to students. However, on the visit to Thompson Farms, the committee learned of the hurdles a producer may have in getting a product to a school system, including food audits. The volume and expense of food audits can increase the cost of the product making it more expensive for a system to buy. The committee also learned that certain producers do not package their own product, so they aren't able to sell directly to schools, such as BrooksCo Dairy. The Department of Agriculture is working with these types of producers to bridge the gap and get those products into local school systems.

### *Georgia Test Kitchen*

To support the Feed My School program, the Georgia Test Kitchen Program was developed in 2014 for the purpose of developing Georgia grown cafeteria-ready recipes. School nutrition directors apply for their system to become part of the program and there are currently 19 schools participating. The recipes developed through this program are shared with all school systems throughout the state.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Encourage the Department of Education to include additional points (up to a maximum) on the new College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) for school activities that could improve student achievement. Specifically, the menu of additional activities should include various participation/rates in school nutrition programs, such as the school breakfast program and the 2020 Vision Plan for School Nutrition. This will incentive school systems to participate in programs that could increase student achievement.
- Further study how to increase school nutrition best practices in Georgia. The group participating in further study should include school nutrition directors currently engaging in best practices and other interested parties such as the Department of Early Care and Learning, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Education, and the

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<sup>7</sup> Georgia Grown 2016 Annual Report

Department of Public Health. The group should look at best practices in financial management, procurement, curriculum integration, nutrition education, food safety, and hands-on production training.

- Encourage the Department of Education to include the school system's completion of the 20/20 Vision Plan in the Department of Education's new software reporting program. Further, direct the Department of Education to investigate and research different ways to encourage school systems to participate in the 2020 Vision Plan for School Nutrition.